

"Every professional needs good business skills, from dentists to architects to school principals."

—Yvette Schroeder



# BUSINESS BRIEF

## A HIGH SCHOOL OF BUSINESS™ SPECIAL REPORT

### A Successful Start-Up

Walk into Yvette Schroeder's *Principles of Business* class and you might be surprised at what you see. Teams of students sitting at tables instead of traditional desks. A noisy atmosphere as they discuss the most suitable new businesses for their community based on demographic research. Students moving from the classroom to the adjacent computer lab to conduct research for their projects. For these students, Mrs. Schroeder's class at Leipsic High School in tiny Leipsic, Ohio, isn't "school as usual" . . . and that's what they enjoy. "This program is set up for you to think," Mrs. Schroeder tells me during our discussion about the program. And her students have risen to meet the challenges that learning via project-based pedagogy presents.

### Student reaction

"There is a lot of excitement here about the program," says Mrs. Schroeder, an experienced teacher with a background in the business world. "The students feel special because they are researching real, relevant issues that none of the other classes are working on. They come into the classroom each day wanting to learn." In the *Principles of Business* course, the focus is on local companies and organizations. As students research business concepts, they discover how local businesses are affected by issues such as global trade, growth of technology, and government policy.

### Setting the stage

From the moment Leipsic High signed on, the leaders at the school billed High School of Business™ as a unique, high-level program. What began with communicating and promoting Leipsic's selection as a High School of Business™ site continued throughout the spring semester in many other ways, including

- ★ Letters to parents. These personal letters announced the program and its benefits to all parents in the district.
- ★ Local media. The school contacted local newspapers and arranged for interviews in which they discussed the program's benefits to students and the community.

- ★ Informational meetings. Students learned about the program during these meetings. Guidance counselors assisted in identifying students with expressed interests in business and college.
- ★ Honors student meeting. Guidance department-identified honors students were invited to a special meeting that focused on the program's benefits for them, including the opportunity to better prepare themselves for college business administration programs.

### In the classroom

Ironically, many teachers find that asking students to think about real problems and to take on more responsibility in solving problems and projects is exciting for them. Mrs. Schroeder says that her students "enjoy figuring things out without being told exactly how to do it." But not all students, and especially not at first. Some, especially those who have done well in more traditional, lecture-style settings, will initially be uncomfortable with the new learning format. These students are very good at memorizing and test-taking. They will be concerned about grades that are calculated partly based on project work. Because there's not just one right answer in PBL, these traditional students need some time to find their footing. Veteran PBL teacher Robbie Reed, from Centennial High in Franklin, Tennessee, believes this usually takes about nine weeks. After that, she says, "most students excel in a PBL environment, where they are able to be creative and take charge of their learning." For her part, Mrs. Schroeder encourages them through their first weeks of project work in this way: "I remind them every day that they need this experience . . . through High School of Business™ they are doing upper-level, even college-level work."

### Small School Strategies

This year's senior class at Leipsic High has 74 students. And that's the largest in recent years.

- ★ Communicate, communicate communicate. Whether small school or large, be sure that the students, parents, school staff, administrators, and community know about the program and its benefits.
- ★ Involve the community. The Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary, and the county development organization, among others, have a vested interest in the education of future community leaders. Get them involved by presenting the program at their meetings and asking participants to be guest speakers or host class visits to their workplaces.
- ★ Offer open enrollment. Leipsic offers open enrollment so that students from other schools in the county can join High School of Business™.



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